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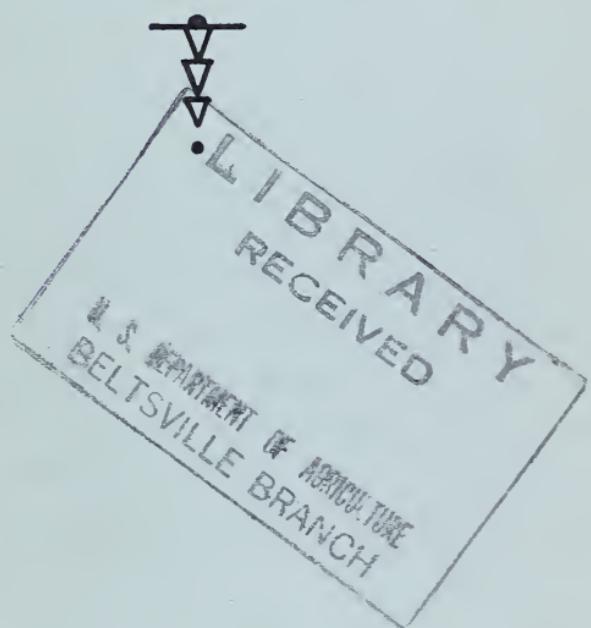
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The

EUROPEAN EARWIG

and

ITS CONTROL



BUREAU OF ENTOMOLOGY

and

PLANT QUARANTINE

AGRICULTURAL
RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

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THE EUROPEAN EARWIG attracts attention more as a nuisance in and around habitations than because of the damage it does. When it invades the home, its formidable appearance, unpleasant odor, and habit of frequenting unsanitary locations make it an unwelcome guest. It visits the pantry as freely as it does the parlor. Since it is also a potential carrier of disease, it threatens the health as well as the comfort of the householder.

Distribution

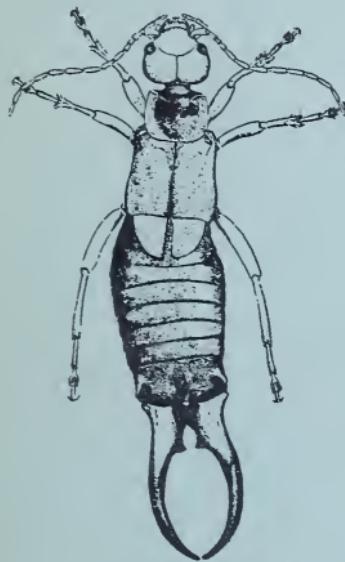
In this country the European earwig is known to occur in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Washington, Oregon, California, and Nevada. Its spread is accomplished with the aid of man--in bundles of newspapers, travelers' baggage, shipments of merchandise, and similar ways.

Food Plants

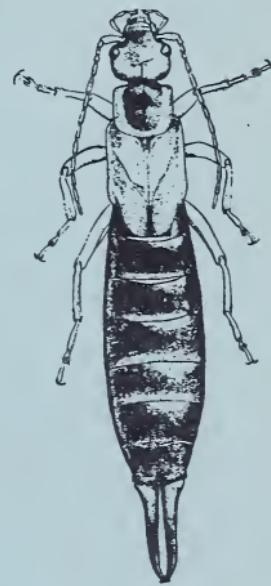
This earwig feeds on the leaves and flowers of such plants as zinnia, hollyhock, dahlia, and butterflybush. Lettuce, celery, Swiss chard, sweet corn, and other vegetables may be eaten or befouled. Ripe fruit also serves as food, peaches and apricots being especially attractive. However, the earwig seldom causes serious damage to cultivated plants.

Appearance and Habits

Full-grown earwigs are about 3/4 inch long and reddish-brown in color. The young look much like the adults. A distinctive feature is the pair of prominent forceps at the rear of the body, those of the male being strongly curved.



Male



Female

Earwigs forage at night and hide in dark places during the day. Both vegetable and animal food is taken. The latter is ordinarily dead when eaten, but earwigs are known to feed on small living insects, particularly aphids.

Control

Traps

Since earwigs collect in dark places during the day, they can be trapped and destroyed. Various kinds of traps are sold for this purpose.

Baits

A more effective remedy is a poisoned bait made up as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Bran..... | 12 pounds |
| Sodium fluosilicate.... | 1 pound |
| Fish oil..... | 1 quart |

Mix the dry bran thoroughly with the poison, add the fish oil, and then mix thoroughly again. Do not use water.

This quantity of bait is enough for an area of about 8,000 square feet.

Broadcast the bait thinly over the entire premises, taking particular care to scatter it along or at the base of fences, shrubbery, trees, telephone poles, wood piles, and other places frequented by the earwigs. Avoid getting the bait on the foliage of flowering plants and shrubs, for it may cause injury. Do not sprinkle lawns where the bait has been applied until at least two nights have passed.

Sodium fluoride, barium fluosilicate, or paris green may be substituted for sodium fluosilicate, but these materials are less effective. Commercial baits may be obtained in localities where the European earwig is a common pest.

Earwigs move about very freely. For this reason a small plot of land to which the bait has been applied may become reinfested in a very short time through movement from the surrounding area. The best results are obtained through cooperative campaigns, wherein the bait is broadcast throughout several city blocks or larger areas.

Caution: The insecticides used in baits are poisonous. Keep them and the bait out of the reach of children and pets. Do not use the bait in poultry yards, although chickens can eat a large quantity before showing ill effects. Where danger to poultry or game birds makes broadcasting inadvisable, the bait may be placed in boxes perforated with a few small holes to allow the earwigs to enter.

DDT or Chlordane

According to entomologists in some States where the European earwig is a pest, you can also obtain good control by spraying or dusting thoroughly with DDT or chlordane. Use a 5-percent dust or a spray containing 1 pound of a 50-percent wettable powder in 25 gallons of water. Apply to the entire infested area, especially along fences, walks, and buildings. Do not sprinkle treated areas for at least two nights after the application.

Caution: DDT and chlordane are poisons. Unless residues can and will be removed by washing or stripping, do not apply these insecticides to fruit or foliage that will be eaten.

If you use chlordane indoors, direct it only to places where earwigs crawl or hide. Do not let it contaminate the air or surfaces frequently in contact with persons. Do not allow any insecticide to contaminate food or food utensils.

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The scientific name of the European earwig is Forficula auricularia L.

